

REMARKS

Claims 1, 7-8, 14, 16 and 21-24 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 8, 16 and 22 are amended to even more clearly distinguish from the cited references and to overcome the Office Action's rejections under 35 U.S.C. §101; claim 8 is further amended to overcome the Office Action's rejection under 35 U.S.C. §112; and claims 7, 14 and 23 are amended for consistency. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 8, 16 and 22 can be found, for example, in Applicants' specification at page 12, lines 8-9, Fig. 1 and page 18, line 26 - page 19, line 27. No new matter is added by the amendments.

With respect to item 4 on page 2 of the Office Action, Applicants have not copied claims from any other application or patent, and thus Applicants are not attempting to provoke an interference. A certified copy (but no translation) of Applicants' priority document was submitted on October 2, 2003, and its receipt was previously acknowledged by the Patent Office.

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112. Claim 8 has been amended to overcome the rejection. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

Claims 1, 7, 8, 14, 16 and 21-24 stand rejected in four separate rejections under 35 U.S.C. §101 as being directed to non-statutory subject matter. Claims 1, 8, 16 and 22 have been amended to overcome the rejections. In particular, claims 1, 8 and 22 now explicitly recite that a computer is configured to function as the various units, and claim 16 now explicitly recites that the method is implemented by a computer. Withdrawal of the rejections is requested.

Claims 1, 8, 16 and 22-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Nakayasu (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0051178) in view of Wiechers (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0075509). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The combination of Nakayasu and Wiechers fails to disclose, or render obvious the combination of features recited in independent claims 1, 8, 16 and 22. Specifically, Nakayasu in view of Wiechers fails to disclose or render obvious the feature "the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval". The Office Action alleges that Wiechers discloses a second search in a new localized zone for printer candidates. See paragraph [0029]. In conducting a second search after it is determined that a user's printer parameters 235, time expectation of user 245, or cost expectation of user 250 cannot be met, step 240 is taken to loop back to find localized zone step 225, where a localized zone is defined with respect to the network user's locale. See paragraphs [0027]-[0029] and Fig. 3. However, the localized zone is a geographic region close to the network user's locale and thus, the second localized zone must be substantially similar to the first localized zone. See Wiechers paragraph [0025] and Fig. 3. Thus, Nakayasu when modified in view of Wiechers fails to disclose or render obvious the feature "the retrieval unit retrieves a second service location included in a second geographic area, which is wider and substantially different from the geographic area searched in the first retrieval, in the second retrieval" as recited in independent claims 1, 8, 16 and 22. Accordingly, claims 1, 8, 16 and 22 are patentable. Claims 23 and 24 are patentable at least due to their dependence on claim 22. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 7, 14 and 21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Nakayasu in view of Wiechers in further view of Ochiai (U.S. Patent No. 7,085,763). Ochiai does not overcome the deficiencies noted above in Wiechers. Thus, claims 7, 14 and 21 are patentable for at least the reasons explained above regarding their respective independent claims. Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of all pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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